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LITHUANIA

BY

RUPERT BROOKE

STEWART KIDD

MODERN PLAYS

EDITED BY

FRANK SHAY

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LITHUANIA

A Drama in One Act

By

RUPERT BROOKE

CINCINNATI
STEWART KIDD COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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13572

CHARACTERS

A Stranger
The Mother
The Daughter
The Father
A Young Man
A Vodka-Shopkeeper
The Vodka-Shopkeeper's Son

498418

LITHUANIA was originally produced at THE CHICAGO LITTLE THEATRE on October 12, 1915, with the following cast:

A STRANGER	*Edward Moseman*
THE MOTHER	*Miriam Kiper*
THE DAUGHTER	*Ellen Van Volkenburg*
THE FATHER	*Maurice Browne*
A YOUNG MAN	*George Wolff*
A VODKA-SHOPKEEPER	*Louis Alter*
THE VODKA-SHOPKEEPER'S SON	*Allan Ross MacDougall*

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

LITHUANIA

The inside of a hut in Lithuania. Table in Centre. To the left of the table a ladder up to the upper story. Behind, in the back wall, a long low window. Doors in the right end of the back wall, and the near end of the left wall. Projecting from the right wall, a large stone stove. Beyond it, a dresser with a basin, etc. It is early night in autumn. Outside the window is a space of moonlight; pine trees are vaguely visible beyond.

At the left end of the table, facing sideways, is sitting the Stranger, finishing a meal. The Daughter is sitting on a stool before the stove, back to the audience, occasionally glancing at the Stranger. The Mother is moving to and fro with plates, food, etc., between the table, the stove, and the dresser. There is a lamp on the table.

The Stranger is in young middle-age, expensively, rather flashily dressed, medium height, rather weakly-built, with black, greased hair, mustaches, and a small pointed beard. Excitable manner. The Mother is fifty or more, medium height, strongly built, but worn and rather bent, thin face, quiet, and occasionally voluble. The Daughter is just past her youth, a little shorter than the Mother, but squarer, heavy-faced and immobile.

STRANGER (*pushing chair back, and finishing vodka*) That's good. That's good. I think I'll be

turning in now. I'm dog-tired after that tramp through the woods. By Jove, I was lucky to find this house!

MOTHER

If you'd bide a small bit. My man'll be in from the fields, any minute now.

STRANGER (*getting up*)

And aren't you two women afraid, being alone in a lonely house like this, these evenings . . .?

MOTHER

What's there for fear? Who'd want anything here, to rob us? And is it likely any one 'ld want me? And Anna—Anna 'ld give them more than they came for. She's stronger than most men.

STRANGER (*rather uneasily, bowing slightly*)

Your daughter's a very well-built girl.

MOTHER

She's strong. She has to work in the fields, with her Dad.

STRANGER

Ah, I suppose it's hard enough to keep things going, with only one man in the family,—or (*quickly*) have you some sons, no doubt?

MOTHER

No. There was one. He ran off when he was thirteen.

STRANGER (*with a nervous, polite little laugh*)

It's a pity. Women want someone to protect them, I always think. Now wouldn't you, as a

mother, welcome him if ever he came back again to help you in your old age?

MOTHER (*undecidedly*)

Well, I don't know — —

DAUGHTER

He was drowned.

(*Short pause.*)

STRANGER

Oh! I beg your pardon—But your husband, does he leave you alone—

(*A man's shout, from some distance.*)

MOTHER

That's him. I'll go and meet him. If you'd bide a minute—I'd rather you saw him before you go to bed. (*Exit.*)

(*Stranger strolls, rather swaggeringly, to the stove.*)

STRANGER (*apparently with slight suppressed excitement*)

I suppose a fine young girl like you must sometimes be sick of a life of working, working, in this gloomy place,—beautiful as it is.

DAUGHTER (*looks at him steadily*)

Um — —

STRANGER

I'll warrant there's not much fun round here; not many young men, no dancing and so on; ah, you ought to be in a big town!

DAUGHTER (*half to herself*)

I have my fun—

STRANGER

It's wonderful in a big city! The glare and the roar of the streets. Your blood swims with it.

It's a shame you should never know it. Don't you see that you'll only grow hard and worn here; stiffer and duller every day; working, working, working; then you'll be like your mother; and at last you'll shrivel and be ugly; and then you'll die. Now, what'd you say (*laughing a little, rather hysterically*) if some good fairy suddenly came (*looking at her*) and promised to take you to a big city and show you everything, and buy you dresses and jewels, and give you the best of everything, like a lady?

(*Pause.*)

DAUGHTER (*gets up suddenly and crosses to him, limping slightly*)
I'm lame. A dog bit me. Would you like to see? (*Pulls up her skirt and down her stocking and shows place under knee.*) Are ladies' legs like that? See that cut? (*Holding out her hand.*) That's a big nail did that. What'ld they say in cities to that hand? Feel! (*She grips him, with her right hand, just above the left knee; and looks up, smiling slightly. He gives a little exclamation and draws back, rather embarrassed.*) Have you ever felt a lady's hand like that? (*A small pause. She lets go, and goes, swinging, across to the ladder and slowly up it, and, turning to the right, exit.*)

(*He sits down, his hand on his leg. Enter Father and Mother. The Father is of middle height, not very broad, aged about fifty, clean-shaven, of a rather excitable manner, dark-brown hair beginning to go grey.*)

MOTHER
This is my husband.

STRANGER (*going towards him, looking hard at him; a little nervously*)
Are you the master of the house? How do you do? Your wife was kind enough to promise me a bed here. I got lost in the forest, and benighted. I was very lucky to find a house.

FATHER
How were you in the wood: dressed like that, sir?

STRANGER (*slight agitation*)
I'd lost my way. I was trying to walk to Mohilev. It was so fine—I'm very fond of walking—I thought I'd like to walk. I'm going round the small towns of this part on — — — business. Government business.

FATHER
Mohilev? You're a lot out of your way. You must be tired as a horse. And with that bag. You might have been robbed.

STRANGER (*opening the bag*)
Oh, there's nothing much but papers in the bag. But (*excitedly*) I've a lot of money about me. (*Fumbling, and pulling some notes from under his waistcoat.*) See. There's a lot of money! It'ld buy this house twice over, and all in it. I dare bet you've never seen as much money as that on this table in your life before. (*Pulls out some more, laughing hysterically. Finishes the glass of vodka.*)

FATHER (*looking up at him*)
No, Baron.

(*A pause. Mother goes to the stove.*)

MOTHER

It's not safe, walking in these woods with all that upon you.

STRANGER

I didn't meet a soul the whole day, or see a house. This was the first I came to. I came on it straight out of the forest—from the west there. I was glad to see the light!

(*Short pause. Daughter comes back quietly, across back of room and sits down; meanwhile Stranger continues.*)

STRANGER

It must be frightfully lonely here. I should think it would get on one's nerves. To hear the wind in the branches, and watch the night coming on, month after month. I declare, I began to feel quite queer today walking all day alone among the trees. A merry company for me!

(*Short pause.*)

FATHER

There's a fistful of houses down below in the valley; three minutes down. You didn't get to them, Baron; they lie east. There's people there.

MOTHER (*setting table again*)

He goes down to them.

FATHER

And there's work enough to be done about the fields.

STRANGER

But in winter you must find time heavy on your hands?

FATHER

Ah—winter's coming.

STRANGER

I expect you'll all be glad when you've saved up a bit and go away and live by some town.

FATHER

That—that'll be when the rams milk,—when God wakes from his snoring and remembers his poor.

MOTHER (*reproving mechanically*)

Oh, Ivan!

FATHER

There's no living off this land.

(*Pause.*)

STRANGER

Well, I'm dog-tired after that tramp through the woods. I think I'll be turning in. It must be late?

FATHER

It should be after eight.

STRANGER (*laughing*)

Why, I declare, you've no clock! (*Pause. Laughing loud.*) Why, you'll not know what time to go to bed! I must leave you mine for the night. I really must. (*Taking his out of his waistcoat.*) Look! It's good gold, all of it! I'll hang it up there. I'll bet you've never seen a gold watch hanging up on your wall, eh?

(*Daughter looks at Mother behind his back,*

Mother at Daughter. Father looks at each of the three, drumming on the table. Pause.)

MOTHER (*taking up the lamp*)
Shall I show you the bed, Baron?

STRANGER
Yes. I really must turn in. (*Turns to the watch.*) There, what do you say to that! (*Goes up to Daughter.*) Good-night, my little Anna. (*Puts hand on her shoulder, and presses it.*) Good-night! (*She stands stiffly up, dropping a slight curtsey. Stranger turns to Father.*) Good-night! Good-night! I'm afraid I've robbed you of the best part of your meal. I must apologize! But I'll pay for it. You shan't regret your hospitality. (*Goes up towards him as if to shake his hand or embrace him: hesitates and passes on after Mother, up the ladder.*)

FATHER (*after him*)
It's poor food: but you're welcome to it.

MOTHER (*up the ladder*)
It's a poor room for you—we sleep to the right here. You'll not be troubled if you hear us moving — — (*Exeunt, talking.*)

(*Light from stove, R. Daughter standing at stove. Father sits down to eat, at R. end of table, facing audience.*)

FATHER (*eating*)
You're always talking about men, there's one for you. Why don't you go to him? He was looking at you. And he's drunk a lot.

DAUGHTER (*bringing soup and pouring it in*)
He's an undersized, white-handed, dirty little man.

FATHER

You're afraid. You're always afraid.

DAUGHTER

He's not a man. He's a little, weak, chattering, half a man: like you.

FATHER (*turns round savagely and catches her with wrench by the upper arm. A spoon is knocked from her hand.*)

DAUGHTER (*twisting her arm free and hitting his hand down; without raising her voice*)

If you hit me, I'll kill you. (*Goes to seat R. front and sits down with her back to the audience.*)

MOTHER (*enters with lamp, places it on table, and puts it out*)

Have you brought anything?

FATHER

No. There's a curse on these woods. There's not a hare nor a bird in them. They're as quiet as the dead.

MOTHER (*sits down on the further side of the stove, three-quarters face to the audience*)

We can't get through the winter. We've nothing.

FATHER

I'm hungry. There's never food enough in this bloody house. There's no living off this land.

MOTHER

I gave him all there was. I knew he was a rich man. We'll get enough from him for eight days, maybe.

FATHER

And then?

MOTHER

We've always got through—

FATHER (*getting up excitedly*)

I'm sick of it, I say. I'll go off to the towns. There's money there. Why should I stay here and work for you two as well as myself? I'll go off alone. (*Catches sight of watch.*) Look at that! Why should he have that and we be starving? It would keep us a year. How did he get it? Who is he? Why did he talk like that?

MOTHER

He had drunk. He is a rich man.

FATHER

He's mad, I say. Who ever heard tell of a man walking through these woods because he liked it, if he wasn't mad? And in that coat, and with a bag?

DAUGHTER

No one saw him come.

MOTHER

If he's mad, we might get a reward for keeping him. His parents would be very rich.

FATHER

He's not mad. But he's queer. Something was driving him mad. Why should he have come here? All that money — — the way he talked — — — Do you think it's his?

(*Mother and Daughter look at each other, scarcely moving their heads, at intervals through the conversation.*)

MOTHER

If it's not his — — —

FATHER

He looked like a thief. He's a thief's manner.

He stole it, I say. He's escaping, hiding. That's why he came here.

DAUGHTER

No one knows he's here.

MOTHER

If he's a thief, we might get a reward for giving him up, or something.

FATHER (*snatching down watch*)

This gold thing, and all that money, what right has he to it? There may be people starving because he stole it? He looked like a thief.

DAUGHTER

He was a little weak, undersized man — —

(*Pause.*)

FATHER (*leaning against the end of the table*)

I'm working, and keeping you two, and doing my best, and I'm starving. And he's a thief and alone, and he has all that money. If there were a God, would He let that be?

MOTHER

Ivan!

(*Pause.*)

FATHER (*as if unwillingly, and still louder*)

We've as good right to it as him. What's money to a hunted man, alone?

MOTHER

Hush! You'll wake him!

FATHER (*much lower*)

Why do I care if he hears?

(*Pause.*)

DAUGHTER

He'll sleep deep, being tired.

(*Pause. The light from the stove is lower.*)

FATHER
Why do you look at me?

(*Pause.*)

MOTHER (*her hands fumbling; drawing silently closer to the stove*)
We'll never get through the winter.

(*Pause.*)

FATHER (*shrilly*)
Why do you look at me? What are you both thinking? I don't know what you're thinking.

(*Pause.*)

MOTHER
You're shaking, Ivan. You're making the table rattle—

(*Pause.*)

FATHER
Why are you looking at me? I can't see your eyes.

(*Longer pause.*)

FATHER (*nearly crying*)
I killed a man in fight, once — — — — in fight. My God, I — — not — — — (*Small pause. They all rise silently.*) I must think. Say something. Tomorrow—

DAUGHTER
Now.

FATHER
Tomorrow.

MOTHER
Now.

FATHER
He's our guest—
MOTHER
He's a thief.

(*Small pause. Daughter begins to light lamp.*)

MOTHER (*very low and quick*)
He's asleep — — — Only once! He can't struggle. We'll hold him. No one'll ever know. We *must* have the money.—You're a coward!

(*Father meanwhile pulls knife out of sheath, takes lamp mechanically from Daughter; and makes a few steps towards the ladder. The women follow.*)

FATHER
I can do it. (*Takes a few steps; looks back.*) You're filthy. Stay here. You're not to touch him. I'll do it. (*Goes up ladder quickly and quietly.*

(*The Daughter stands by bottom of ladder, leaning against it. Mother goes back towards stove. Long pause. Slight sounds. Daughter puts one foot slowly on bottom rung of ladder. Suddenly Father appears and comes down. Puts lamp on table. Leans against table, shivering. Mother comes forward. Pause.*)

FATHER (*nods.*)
DAUGHTER
The knife's clean.
MOTHER
Did you?—
FATHER
I — — (*Crumblingly.*) No! I feel dead-sick. I

couldn't. I didn't go in. I've been working all day. I'm sick. (*Coughs and retches slightly.*)

MOTHER

You *must.*

FATHER

I can't—like this. Vodka. I want drink in me.

MOTHER

He drank it. You *must.*

(*Father goes unsteadily to back of stage. Puts on his coat.*)

FATHER (*fumbling in his pocket*)

I'm going down to the shop to get drink. I've got a few *kopeks.* I'll get so I can do it. I'll drink till I'd stick Almighty God. (*Straightens himself, speaks more controlledly.*) When I come back you'll see: I'll be ready to knife anybody. I tell you I'm tired now, and sick. You can't kill a man when your throat's full of stink, and you're going to be sick. I've been working all day. (*Fumbling at the door.*) I'll be back in no time. I swear I'll kill him. I'll drink murder into me. My God! (*Exit by the door, R. B.*)

(*His figure is seen passing the window, going across to the left, running, rather slowly. Mother and Daughter watch him cross; then listen a moment. No sound from above. Mother puts out the lamp. They sit down by the stove in their usual places, Daughter with her back to the audience. The Daughter opens the mouth of the stove, puts log of wood in, and leaves the mouth open. A certain amount of light comes out.*)

DAUGHTER

He's a coward.

MOTHER

He's all right.

DAUGHTER

He's a coward.

MOTHER

He's not that. He thinks so much. *You* can't understand. He'll be all right when he's got drink in him. It'll stop him thinking.

DAUGHTER

If I'd started off to kill a man, I wouldn't need to stop to drink.

MOTHER

You'd — — — I was afraid we wouldn't get him to it.

DAUGHTER

He'll get drunk.

MOTHER

He's not got enough money to get drunk on.— Besides, he knows what he's gone for.

DAUGHTER

He's gone to get away. (*Short pause.*) It's hard, waiting.

MOTHER

He'll do it when he comes back. (*Gets up and goes to foot of ladder, and wanders back again. Standing.*) I know him. (*Takes down watch and examines it.*) Do you think he's a thief?

DAUGHTER

I don't know. We'll be rich. We'll get away from here.

MOTHER (*hangs up watch*)

It's the same anywhere. But we won't starve, then.

DAUGHTER

It's Hell, waiting. (*Pause.*) One must do things straight, and not think. It'll be harder.

MOTHER (*going irresolutely towards the window*)

It's bright, outside. (*Suddenly.*) No one can have seen in, can they? When *he* was at supper? (*Turns.*)

DAUGHTER

No. They couldn't see from the road.

MOTHER (*comes back and sits down*)

Anyhow, who could come by here at night?

DAUGHTER

They come here, sometimes.

MOTHER

"Sometimes!" They come a lot to see you, don't they?—Young men. Twice a year! When I was a girl—

DAUGHTER

You're always jealous of me—

(*The voices get a little shrill, naggingly, not angrily.*)

MOTHER

Jealous! When I was a girl, I'd a dozen after me.

(*Stranger appears silently, at top of ladder, in shirt and trousers, bare-foot, and comes quietly down, holding a burning match in his left hand, looking rather dazedly excited.*)

DAUGHTER

It's a dirty thing to be old and jealous.

MOTHER

You've always hated me. I'm your mother, it's wrong to hate your mother—you're not natural.

DAUGHTER

It's you hate me. You're my mother, right enough. I've seen love turn—

MOTHER

You don't know what it is to be a mother. You never will, very like.

(*The Stranger reaches the bottom of the ladder; it creaks. The Daughter, at the second creak, looks round and stares agape, startled. The Mother sees her face, breaks off, looks round, and jumps up exclaiming. Short pause.*)

MOTHER

What do you want?

STRANGER

Oh! Isn't your husband here?

MOTHER

He's gone out.—Has anything disturbed you, Baron?

STRANGER

No—you—see—no—I wanted to speak to him. I thought—I wanted to do it tonight.—It doesn't matter.—When will he be back?

MOTHER

I—I don't know—

DAUGHTER

Not for hours, maybe. He comes back very late.

STRANGER (*advancing a step or two*)

Oh, tomorrow'll do.

MOTHER (*going quickly to the window*)
It's very cold. (*Folds rather old wooden shutters across and bars them with a great rusty iron bar. The Stranger is staring with a vague uneasiness about.*) We'll lock up and go to bed. My man comes in later. Did you want anything, Baron?

STRANGER
No, I only thought, if he was here;—I'd something I wanted to get clear before I could sleep. It's nothing. (*Drifts back to ladder.*)

MOTHER
We didn't disturb you, Baron?—Our talking?

STRANGER
Oh, no, I assure you! I—I went to sleep for a bit, and woke up suddenly. I felt, somehow, I shouldn't go to sleep again until I'd got clear — — —

MOTHER
You'll sleep sound enough, Baron. You'll not hear anything.

STRANGER (*more abruptly*)
Yes. I'm sorry to have startled you.—A fancy — — — Tomorrow'll do—I'll sleep like a log.

(*Starts climbing up ladder.*)

MOTHER (*still in front of window*)
Yes. You must be tired.

(*Daughter stands up. Exit Stranger. Mother comes forward. Mother and Daughter converse in whispers.*)

MOTHER
What did he mean? Why did he come down?

DAUGHTER
I don't know.

MOTHER
Had he heard?

DAUGHTER
I don't think so. Perhaps he woke up frightened.

MOTHER
Or he's mad.

DAUGHTER
He was queer all the time.

MOTHER
Could he have been drunk—on that little? Men do queer, restless things when they're drunk—

DAUGHTER
Will he come again?

MOTHER
It makes it worse—that he's like that,—that—

(*Knocks at door, R. B. The women clutch at each other, and stand looking around. Knocks again. Mother whispers,* "We must open." *Daughter nods. Mother goes over to door. Daughter moves quickly to fireplace and takes watch down and thrusts it in her bosom. Mother opens door slightly: looks out: opens it wider, saying,* "Ah, step in Paul!" *and admits a Young Man, carrying a hare. The Young Man stamps his feet, and takes off his coat. He is rather tall, neutral colored, solid-faced, aged 25, clean-shaven.*)

MOTHER
You're calling very late—

YOUNG MAN

It's not half-past eight. I only stepped in for a minute.

MOTHER

I was just tidying up. We go to bed early. (*Keeps looking round towards the ladder.*)

YOUNG MAN

I just stepped in to bring you this. (*Throwing hare on table.*)

MOTHER

It's very good of you. (*Taking it up and looking at it.*)

YOUNG MAN

I'd like to get warm a minute.

(*Daughter and Young Man come towards stove.*)

MOTHER (*takes lantern and goes towards ladder*)

I'll be putting straight, upstairs. (*Goes up ladder. To Daughter.*) You'll be coming soon. (*Exit, right.*)

(*Daughter takes up hare, and handles.*)

YOUNG MAN

It's close in here. (*Pause.*) It's dirty and cold outside. Is your father here?

DAUGHTER

He's gone down, to drink.

YOUNG MAN

It's good of your mother to leave us.

DAUGHTER

She's putting straight, upstairs.

YOUNG MAN (*grinning*)

She's not moving about. There's no noise.

DAUGHTER
Never mind her!

(*Pause.*)

YOUNG MAN
I didn't know you went to bed so early.

DAUGHTER
You've not often been.

YOUNG MAN
Maybe I'd not have come, if I'd known—
You're not very hospitable in this house.

DAUGHTER
It was good of you to bring this.

YOUNG MAN
I snared her today.

DAUGHTER
I wish — — I think Mother wants to shut the house up.

YOUNG MAN
Don't you want to see me?

DAUGHTER
It's not that. I'm very tired. You'd better go, Paul.

YOUNG MAN
You weren't in your fields today. I went to look.

DAUGHTER
I've done a lot. (*Comes up nearer to him.*) Go. Paul, I want to see you. Come—any day. (*In sudden anger.*) Go, will you?

YOUNG MAN (*putting a hand on each of her shoulders*)
Why do you never say things? I've never understood you.

DAUGHTER (*hitting his arm down and shaking herself free*)
Go! I'll see you again.
YOUNG MAN (*catching her quietly by the wrist as she hits his arm down*)
I'll stay a bit, maybe.
DAUGHTER (*pulls herself free*)
Go!
YOUNG MAN
What if I don't?
DAUGHTER (*seizing him by the upper arm in a passion and making him reel*)
Go, will you?
YOUNG MAN (*pulls her in to him; they struggle*)
You're not so strong!

(*After a second's struggle he kisses her on the mouth. Their mouths part, and she kisses him again. She is pressed back and strikes the edge of the table, which rattles. Released, she leans back against it. He grins.*)

DAUGHTER (*half whispering*)
You'll have something over!
YOUNG MAN
You're not so strong!
DAUGHTER
Go, for God's sake.
YOUNG MAN
I'll come again.
DAUGHTER
Yes; tomorrow.
YOUNG MAN (*picking up his coat*)
I'll come earlier, one day. Come out into the lane and meet me.

DAUGHTER
Yes.

YOUNG MAN (*putting on his coat*)
We'll have things to say.

DAUGHTER
I've got to go to bed now.

YOUNG MAN
Give me a kiss! (*She stands impassive. He kisses her.*) Good-night.

(*Exit Young Man, R. B. She shuts the door after him, quietly.*)

MOTHER (*comes quickly down*)
He's gone.

DAUGHTER (*nods.*)

MOTHER (*jerking her head towards the ladder*)
If *he* had come down when Paul was here!———

DAUGHTER
Someone else may come in.

MOTHER
A lot of young men smell you out, don't they?

DAUGHTER
You fool!——— We *must* have the money. I want to get away from here.

MOTHER
Do you think anyone 'd look at you in a town? They like them fine made there.

DAUGHTER
He *must* come soon. He must do it. (*Sits down.*)

(*Pause.*)

DAUGHTER
He's been away an hour.

MOTHER
Five minutes, more like.

(*Pause.*)

MOTHER (*starting suddenly up*)
What was that?

DAUGHTER
What?

MOTHER
A step.

DAUGHTER
Where?

MOTHER
Outside. It's Ivan.

DAUGHTER
I heard nothing.

MOTHER
Perhaps it's somebody else.

(*Pause. Silence.*)

DAUGHTER
It wasn't anything.

MOTHER
If he daren't, again, this time — —

DAUGHTER
He's a coward.

MOTHER
He's tired. Perhaps he'll be drunk.

(*Pause.*)

MOTHER (*shifting*)
I can't bear waiting. It's as if somebody's watching us.

(*Pause.*)

DAUGHTER (*rises and limps over to a box on ledge beyond the stove: rummages there.*)

MOTHER (*huskily*)

What are you doing?

DAUGHTER

These knives are old and weak.

MOTHER

You — — Sit down. He'll come.

DAUGHTER (*stooping over box of firewood*)

I'll go mad, waiting. (*Rises with an axe in her hand.*) This isn't very sharp. But it's heavy.

MOTHER

What do you mean?

DAUGHTER (*lighting lamp on the table*)

Hush. We can do it.

MOTHER (*getting up*)

You mustn't. Do you think?—

DAUGHTER

He's a weak little man. Take off your skirt and throw it over him up to the neck and hold it down so as he can't get his hands out. Hold fast.

(*Mother slips off her outer skirt. Daughter takes up the lantern.*)

MOTHER (*going to the ladder*)

Come on quickly, for Christ's sake. Oh, thank God.

DAUGHTER

We'll put the lantern on the shelf.

(*They go quietly up the ladder—daughter first, and disappear left. Pause. Slight muffled noises. A shout. A crashing thud. A groan broken by a thud. A succession of rather regular heavy thuds.*

While these are still going on there is the sound of quick steps above, and the Mother comes, half falling down the ladder, sobbing quietly. The thuds cease.)

MOTHER (*collapsing on to a stool at the table*)
O Christ! Stop! Stop! O Christ!

(*The Daughter comes slowly dowstairs, the light in one hand, holding the axe stiffly down with the other; drawing long difficult audible breaths. The Mother ceases sobbing.*)

MOTHER
Why did you go on hitting?

DAUGHTER (*putting lamp on table*)
I couldn't help it.

MOTHER
You went on and on. I thought you were mad. He cried out on his mother, at first.

DAUGHTER (*standing*)
He didn't.

MOTHER
He cried on his mother. She'll never know. You went on and on hitting. You were horrible. Why did you?

DAUGHTER
I couldn't stop. (*Goes round and stands by the stove.*)

MOTHER
Why did you go on and on hitting? I thought you were mad. I hated you.

DAUGHTER
I couldn't help it.

(*Pause.*)

MOTHER

Why are you still holding that thing?

DAUGHTER (*goes up beyond stove and throws axe into woodbasket. Returns and sits in her seat, back to audience.*)

MOTHER

I'll never use that skirt again.

DAUGHTER

You'll never need to.

(*Pause. Mother begins slowly clearing remains of supper away. Daughter puts her head in her hands and begins sobbing.*)

MOTHER

Well; he won't move now. We'll make Ivan bury him out in the woods tonight; or tomorrow. We'll get away from here before the thick of winter. (*Faint noise from outside, some distance away.*) We'll have plenty—What's that? It's Ivan coming back. (*Noise louder and increasing.*) Get ready, lass. It's done. There's someone with him. I hear talking. Perhaps it's somebody else. Get up—look yourself. We must be ready.

DAUGHTER (*jumping up*)

It's done. We can tell him it's done. I'm glad. We can get away. We'll be rich. I'll wear silk.

MOTHER (*breaking in*)

It's Ivan. I hear his name. Who's he bringing with him? Is he mad?

DAUGHTER

He's drunk.

(*Rattling at door L. Front.*)

MOTHER

He's arrested. (*Goes to door and opens it.*)

(*Vodka-shopkeeper and his Son enter, the Father between them. Vodka-shopkeeper a tall, blond, jolly man of about forty, hairy face and inclined to be stout. His son eighteen, slight, rather darker, and self-conscious.*
Vodka-shopkeeper holds a boot in his right hand. His Son holds a vodka bottle. They are supporting the Father, who is drunk, dazed-looking and dragging. He has only one boot on. The Vodka-shopkeeper and his Son are also slightly drunk; Vodka-shopkeeper excited. Son sly and flushed. Mother and Daughter both standing.)

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER

Evening, missus! We've brought your man home. (*Laughing.*)

MOTHER

Ivan — — — ?

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER

He wanted to come alone. He said he had something to do. (*Laughs.*) He said he had to go quietly. He *would* take his boot off. (*Holds boot up.*) We couldn't stop him. He couldn't get the other off. Said he had to go "quietly." You should have seen him going quietly—laugh—my God!

(*Father, asleep, collapses at the foot of the ladder.*)

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER

Here—hold up. He's gone dazed from the open air. Give him a drop to wake him up.

(*Son pours from bottle into glass left on table, shakes Father and makes him drink it.*)

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER'S SON

He came into the shop shivering and white. My God! "Drink," he says. I gave him a glass. He drank two before he spoke. "I've got something to do," he said. (*Giggling.*)

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER

When I came in he was drunk—blind. He can't have eaten all day, getting like that on three glasses. He was talking big about his Luck. We all had a glass to his Luck. "As much as you like, now," I said.

FATHER (*suddenly*)

Hush! (*Tries to begin to climb ladder—falls against it.*)

MOTHER (*screaming*). .

Ivan!

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER (*delightedly*)

That's it. O, he's all right. He won't hurt himself. You should 'a seen him, hopping along in the mud like a lame hare. "I've got to go quietly," he said. Laugh! We were nearly sick. "I've Luck," he said. "God's good to me." "Here's to God," I said. "*I* know your luck. No more starving now!" We all drank. (*Pours out, and drinks from glass.*)

(*Mother and Daughter stare suddenly at him. Father rises to his feet and stands wavering—holds up one hand.*)

FATHER

Quietly! Quietly! (*Nods his head.*)

(*Mother runs to him and holds him by the arm, still staring at the Vodka-shopkeeper.*)

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER'S SON (*giggling*)
He kept saying it. "Quietly," he said, Didn't he, Dad? "I've something to do—*quietly*," he said. "Not a sound," he said. He took his boot off and hopped through the mud like—like—a lame hare!

MOTHER (*to Vodka-shopkeeper*)
You know—

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER (*grinning*)
Rather.

MOTHER (*calmly*)
Of course, you share—the Luck.

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER (*cheerfully*)
I get what comes to me. I told him so. We all get a little. It's a great day. He's up there, I suppose. (*Nodding to the upper story.*)

(*Mother nods.*)

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER
Tired, eh? (*Laughs.*)

MOTHER (*after a short pause, leaving go of Ivan*)
You see——— (*Begins again.*) He told you?

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER (*expanding*)
Rather! First in the village he came to. (*Father drinks again.*) I'd never have known him. He knew me—after twenty years! We had a glass. He told me of his joke. "I'll be the first to congratulate them in the morning," I said, " 't isn't often one gets a son back! Ivan'll be glad of a son!"

(*Pause—Ivan waves his glass, puts on an air of mystery, says "Somethin' to be done," sits down on the ladder and gets into a doze. His glass crashes to the ground.*)

MOTHER (*vacantly*)
Son — — — Son — — — (*Leaning on table.*)

(*Daughter stands stiff.*)

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER (*roaring with laughter*)
It's turned all their heads! He said to me, "I've such a game on. I'll knock and say I'm a rich man who's lost his way in the woods, and I want a night's lodging, and I'll show 'em my money, and I'll watch 'em and see 'em all again, and then in the morning I'll say: "Behold, your son which was lost and is found!" Excited—wasn't he just. "You'll never keep the secret all night," I said. And he hasn't; I knew he wouldn't. "I'll be the first to congratulate them in the morning," I said. And I'm doing it to-night! (*Drinks from bottle.*)

(*Pause. Mother looking down at the table.*)

DAUGHTER
You knew him?

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER (*blearily*)
Bless you, yes! When he talked of old times. What are you all looking like that for? Didn't he come on here?

DAUGHTER
He did.

(*Pause. Vodka-shopkeeper stares resentfully.*)

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER
You're not very cheerful.

(*Mother goes suddenly to her chair, saying:*)

MOTHER
He cried out "Mother!" (*Sits down.*)

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER (*genially*)
I'll be bound he did!

FATHER (*waking up, suddenly*)
Something to be done.

(*Mother suddenly screams.*)

DAUGHTER
Stop it, Mother!

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER
What is it? What have you done?

(*Vodka-shopkeeper and his Son step a little backward towards door, L. F. Mother continues crying and sobbing loudly.*)

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER (*to Daughter*)
Why are you looking like that? Didn't he tell you who he was?

DAUGHTER
No.

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER
What have you done? Where is he? (*Raises his head suddenly and shouts.*) Ivan! Young Ivan! Ivan!

FATHER (*fumbling with his other boot*)
Not a sound!

(*Pause.*)

MOTHER
He cried out "Mother!" You went on and on hitting. (*Screams.*)

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER
What have you done? You've—(*Backs towards the door, staring—the Son behind him.*)

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER'S SON
She's got something on her hands, Father!

(*Mother still screaming.*)

DAUGHTER
Stop it, Mother!

(*Father starts clambering up ladder, stumbling. Son slips out of door.*)

VODKA-SHOPKEEPER
You've—(*Hurries out, slamming door.*)

(*Mother screaming.*)

DAUGHTER
Stop it, Mother!

FATHER (*vaguely, with immense air of mystery and determination*)
Very softly, now. Quietly, quietly! Quietly—(*Falls onto ladder.*)

DAUGHTER
They'll put me in prison!

CURTAIN

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